Beaver Trapping Questionnaire 2002-03

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Abstract

An estimated 3,644 people trapped for beaver during the 2002-03 beaver trapping season. They harvested an estimated 66,410 beaver. Most beaver were caught in conibears (72%), leg-hold traps were next at 23%, and snares were last at 10%. The number of trappers who trap beaver and the harvest has decreased from 2001-02 levels.

Methods

A special beaver trapping questionnaire was included with the annual furtrapper questionnaire which was sent to a sample of 6,000 people who purchased a resident trapping license or a conservation patron license. The sample was selected from the 2002-03 resident trapping (≈3,000) and the conservation patron (≈3,000) license holders who indicated they were trappers (Fig. 1). Both questionnaires were mailed at the end of the general trapping season (March 15; the beaver trapping season ended April 30 in the northern one third of the state). Trappers were asked if they trapped for beavers during the 2002-03 season, where they trapped, the number of days they trapped, the type and number of traps they used, and the number of beavers they caught. They were also asked the percentage of their pelts they sold in and out of Wisconsin. A second mailing was made to nonrespondents. These data were entered into the DNR UNIX computer and summarized using the Statistical Analysis System (SAS).

Results

All duplicate responses were removed from the survey pool. Replies were obtained from 1,868 (31%) of the 6,000 trappers receiving questionnaires. Respondents to the questionnaires trapped for beaver 20% of the time during the 2002-03 season. This is a decrease in trapper effort from 2001-2002 season when 28% of trappers trapped for beaver. Beaver harvest by beaver management zone shown in Table 1.

An estimate of beaver trappers was derived by multiplying the number of active trappers (active trappers was derived by multiplying the percent of respondents who said they trapped by the total license sales for each of the two trapping license types) by the percent of respondents who said they trapped for beaver. These data provided an estimate of 3,644 beaver trappers during the 2002-03 season. The number of beaver trappers who participated in the 2002-03 season was less than the 3,890 that trapped in 2001-02.

Trappers harvested an estimated 66,410 beaver in 2002-03. The northern one third of the state (zones A and B, Fig. 2) was open until 30 April for beaver trapping for the fifth consecutive season. This was done in an effort to increase the beaver harvest in that part of the state.

In an effort to save dollars, the beaver questionnaire is mailed out with the general trapping questionnaire. This mailing occurred around 15 March to coincide with the closing of the regular trapping season. Because of this many of the beaver trapped in the northern one third of the state (zones A and B) during the latter part of the season are unaccounted for. The actual beaver harvest may have been higher than the estimate.

On the average, trappers trapped 30 days for beaver, had 11 sets out each day, and caught 18.2 beavers each. This is in comparison to 2001-02 levels when trappers average 29 days, 11 sets, and 18.5 beaver. Trappers used conibears in 72% of their sets, leghold traps in 23%, and snares in 10%. As a result, 72% of the beaver were caught in conibears, 23% in leghold traps, and 9% in snares. These numbers were very similar to the 2001-02 beaver trapping season harvest by trap type.

Most trappers felt that the beaver populations were stable in most of the state (Table 2). Trappers also felt that the otter population has increased in the past year in the Southern and Central Otter Zones, while the population is stable in the North (Table 3).

Trappers were also asked if they were willing to change the length of the beaver season to help reduce the amount of incidental take of otters while beaver trapping. Trappers were asked if they were willing to delay the start of the fall season; no delay, 2 weeks, 4 weeks, 6 weeks. Most trappers where willing to delay the start of the fall season 2-6 weeks. Trappers were also asked if they were willing to shorten the spring season; no delay, 2 weeks, 4 weeks, 6 weeks. Again, beaver trappers were willing to change the season 2-6 weeks (Table 4.). Next trappers were asked if they were willing to do both, delay the fall season **and** shorten the spring season. Most beaver trappers were in favor of a delay in both the fall and spring seasons (58.2%). Trappers were also asked if they were in favor of combining the beaver and otter seasons in each zone. A large majority, 84.4%, was in favor of this season change for both species.

The harvest in 2002-03(66,410) was 8% less than the 2001-02 total of 71,985. The price paid for beaver pelts fell/, to $12.67 in 2002-03 from the $13.57 paid in 2001-02 season. Weather conditions for 2002-03 season were similar to the 2001-02 season with above average temperatures and below average snowfall.

Table 1. *Number of respondents, mean number of days trapped, sets, and catch in the regular beaver season in 2002-03 by beaver management zone.*

Region	# of Responses	Mean # of Days Trapped	Mean # of Sets	Mean # Trapped in Regular Season
A	118	39.5	14.8	29.4
B	79	29.7	13.6	20.8
C	161	25.7	7.4	8.7
D	13	12.1	9.7	10.7
Statewide	**371**	**30.4**	**11.1**	**18.2**

Table 2. *Beaver Trapper's observations of beaver populations in the zone they trapped.*

Beaver Zone	Stable	Increasing	Decreasing
Zone A	53.6%	21.1%	25.2%
Zone B	51.3%	26.3%	22.5%
Zone C	41.2%	25.2%	33.5%
Zone D	45.0%	0.0%	55.0%

Table 3. *Beaver Trapper's observations of otter populations in the zone they trapped.*

Otter Zone	Stable	Increasing	Decreasing
Northern	55.4%	27.4%	17.1%
Central	40.9%	43.0%	16.1%
Southern	40.3%	46.3%	13.4%

Table 4. *Beaver Trappers response to suggested changes in the beaver season.*

Season Change	No delay	2 weeks	4 weeks	6 weeks
Delay the fall beaver season by:	40.6%	26.9%	20.1%	12.4%
Shorten the spring beaver season by:	37.0%	31.7%	21.2%	10.1%

PART II.

1. Did you trap beaver during the 2002-2003 season?

☐ (1) Yes ☐ (2) No

2. What percentage of your beaver SETS use conibears, what percentage use leghold traps, and what percentage use snares?

_____% Conibear _____% Leghold _____% Snares

3. What percentage of your beaver CATCH came from conibear sets, what percentage from leghold sets, and what percentage from snares?

_____% Conibear _____% Leghold _____% Snares

4. How many of the beaver that you caught since June, 2002 did you sell?

_____beaver

5. What percent of your catch did you sell:

_____% In Wisconsin _____% Outside Wisconsin

6. Which beaver management zone did you trap in most? (See attached beaver zone map)

☐ Zone A (north of Hwy. 64, west of Hwy. 13)
☐ Zone B (north of Hwy. 64, east of Hwy. 13)
☐ Zone C (south of Hwy. 64)
☐ Zone D (Mississippi River)

7. Please fill in the blanks below for each zone in which you trapped for beaver during the 2002-2003 season regardless of whether you caught any beaver.

Zone	Avg. No. of Sets	No. Days Trapped	No. Beaver Caught Regular Season	No. Beaver Caught Damage/Subsidy Programs

8A. Based on your observations in the zones you trapped, are **beaver** populations stable, increasing, or decreasing? (Please reply **only** for zones you trapped.)

Beaver Zones	Stable	Increasing	Decreasing
Zone A	☐	☐	☐
Zone B	☐	☐	☐
Zone C	☐	☐	☐
Zone D	☐	☐	☐

(Note: See attached beaver zone map.)

8B. Based on your observations in the zones you trapped, are **otter** populations stable, increasing, or decreasing? (Please reply **only** for zones you trapped.)

Otter Zones	Stable	Increasing	Decreasing
North	☐	☐	☐
Central	☐	☐	☐
South	☐	☐	☐

(Note: See attached otter zone map.)

9. The current beaver seasons have been established to allow for optimum harvest and these efforts have begun to show results. At the same time otter mortality from the regular season combined with incidental take, is causing concern. In the future, if we need to shorten seasons in an effort to maintain beaver and otter populations, what would you suggest?

a) Delay the fall beaver season by (check one):
☐ (1) no delay ☐ (2) 2 weeks ☐ (3) 4 weeks ☐ (4) 6 weeks

b) Shorten the spring beaver season by (check one):
☐ (1) no delay ☐ (2) 2 weeks ☐ (3) 4 weeks ☐ (4) 6 weeks

c) Do both a) and b) from above = Delay the fall and shorten the spring beaver seasons (check one):
☐ (1) Yes ☐ (2) No

d) Other (please describe): _____

10. Would you support combining both beaver and otter seasons with standard opening and closing dates for each zone?

☐ (1) Yes ☐ (2) No

Figure 1. *2002-03 Beaver Trapping Questionnaire.*

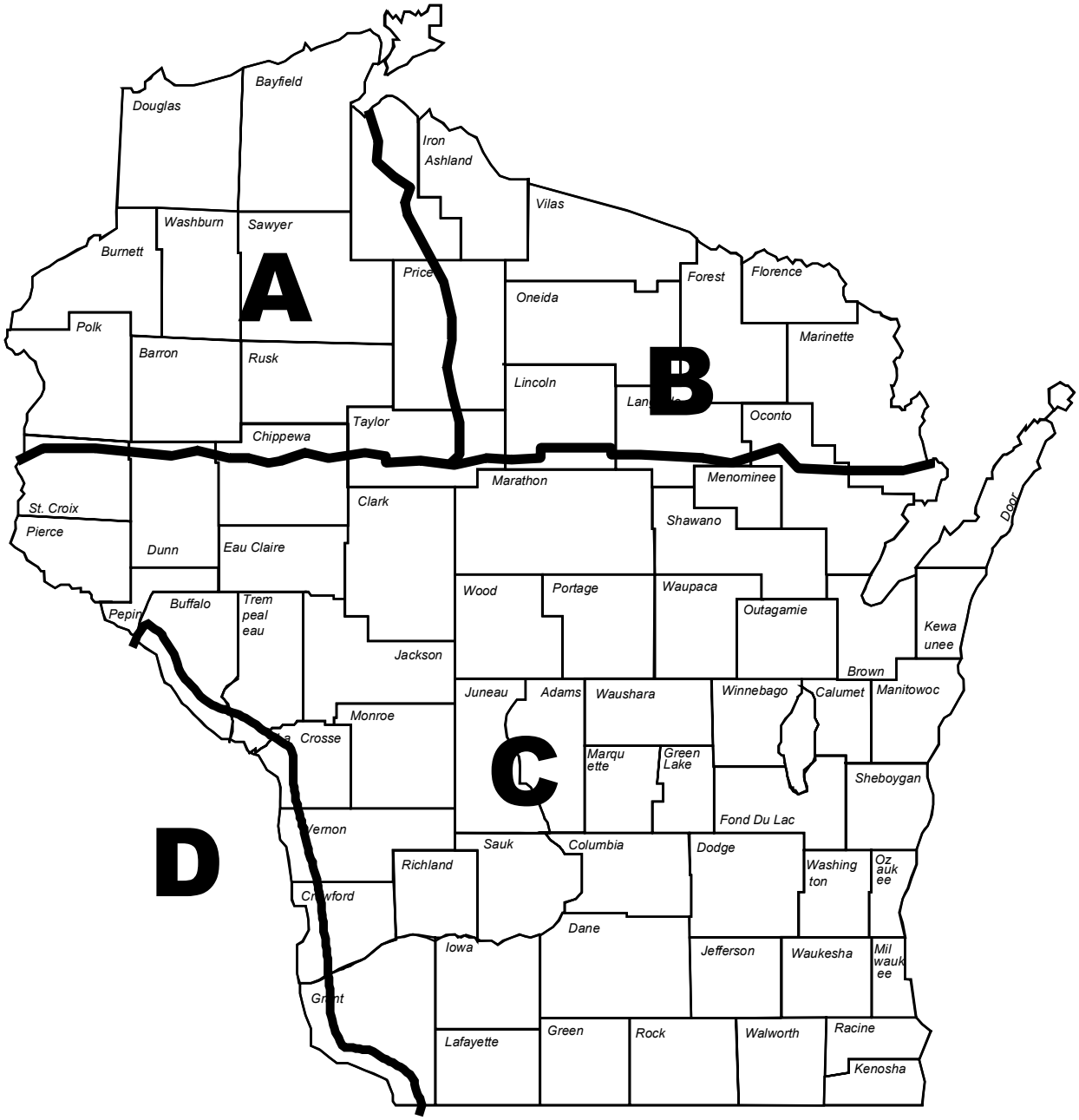

Figure 2. *2002-03 Wisconsin beaver trapping zones.*